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# Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living

## Your Nutritional Health and Registered Dietitians

There are many healthcare professionals that can guide you in your physical health. You have physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and physical therapists, as well as many other specialists. Registered Dietitians are healthcare professionals that can make a big difference in your physical health.

Nutrition plays a major role in combating chronic diseases and illnesses. Poor nutrition can make many illnesses and diseases worse, while eating properly can avoid complications and start the healing process.

If you happen to be at Nutritional Risk or have a chronic illness, a Registered Dietitian can be an active part of your healthcare team to help get you back on track.

One of the biggest misconceptions is that Dietitians take all the good food away. Dietitians love food! Their goal is for you to improve your diet to better meet your needs. That means they look at what you eat and they try to make adjustments to your diet that would improve your health. They often will add food to your diet instead of taking food away. Dietitians biggest phrase is "ALL FOODS CAN FIT IN MODERATION".



### How are Registered Dietitians Trained?

- A Registered Dietitian Nutritionist or RD/RDN must complete a Bachelor's Degree at an accredited university or college and complete appropriate course work. Many choose to obtain a Master's Degree or more.
- They must complete an accredited supervised practice program for six months to one year, to include working in healthcare facility, community agency, and food service.
- RD/RDNs must pass national examination administered by the Commission of Dietetic Registration before receiving their RD/RDN status.
- They must also complete a minimum of 15 hours of continuing education each year or 75 hours in 5 years to maintain their registration.

## Where do Registered Dietitian/Nutritionists work?

- Hospitals and long term care facilities for assessing patients and educating patients and staff on nutrition.
- Schools managing nutrition programs for children.
- Out-patient Dietitians providing medical nutrition therapy in doctors offices and hospitals.
- Corporate agencies and communities to provide wellness programs to help keep us healthy.
- Colleges and Universities for educating dietitians, conducting research, and education development.
- At the State and Federal level to assist in monitoring various programs throughout the state/country, developing programs, services, education materials, and improving health for all populations.
- Menu development and sometimes as chefs to work at developing delicious healthy meals for organizations and companies.
- Sports teams to help improve performance of athletes and teams.



## What to expect when you see a RD/RDN?

1. They will ask you for a food diary to look at what you usually eat.
2. They will review your medical history, height, weight, and age.
3. They will assess you nutritionally to determine the best plan to meet your nutritional needs.
4. They will discuss possible goals to reach that you agree on.
5. They will educate you on the plan to meet the goals designed by you and your doctor.
6. They will follow up with you to check your progress.
7. If referred by your physician, they will send a report back to your doctor on your appointment.

### References:

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

Find a dietitian in your area: <http://www.eatright.org/find-an-expert>

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<http://chfs.ky.gov/dail/default.htm>